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Executive Committee

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Decisions on matters relating to the Committee on Environmental Policy

Draft Decision

Establishment of the coordination mechanism for the development of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the form of the Group of Friends of SEIS

1. At its nineteenth session (Geneva, 22–25 October 2013), the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) conducted a mid-term review to assess the progress in implementation of the main outcomes of the Astana Ministerial Conference, including the establishment of a regular process of environmental assessment and development of the SEIS. The review concluded that progress was rather slow. In spite of an increasing number of SEIS and regular reporting-related initiatives, the landscape remains fragmented and there is a lack of coordination between these activities. Understanding SEIS and its benefits in support of regular assessment and reporting, as well as for increasing the level of environmental awareness and education, are both a top priority and key challenge throughout the region.

2. Following the recommendation by its Bureau, the CEP agreed to establish a coordination mechanism in the form of a "Group of Friends of SEIS", in which the main SEIS stakeholders would participate with a view to strengthening the CEP's work on SEIS at the political level and the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment at the technical level. In this regard, the CEP approved the Group's Terms of Reference (as herewith contained in Annex I)

3. The Group of Friends of SEIS will be chaired by the Chair of the CEP and serviced by the ECE secretariat. The Group will be composed of representatives of: Governments; the CEP Bureau; the Bureau of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment; governing or subsidiary bodies of relevant ECE multilateral environmental agreements; relevant international and regional organizations and institutions; and civil society organizations.

4. The servicing of the group will be funded through existing regular ECE secretariat staff resources. At the same time, extrabudgetary funds will be mobilized to cover participation costs of eligible members of the group, as well as resources to conduct

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coordination missions with the main stakeholders. The extrabudgetary resources required (herewith attached as Annex II) will be mobilized through the CEP and its Bureau.

5. The Executive Committee hereby approves the establishment of the Group of Friends of SEIS and its Terms of Reference (herewith contained in Annex I).

Annex I

Terms of Reference for the Group of Friends of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS)

1. Ministers decided at the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011) to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop a Shared Environment Information System (SEIS) across the region in order to keep the pan-European environment under review. These terms of reference define the modalities of a coordination mechanism, in the form of a Group of Friends of the Shared Environmental Information System (Friends of SEIS).

2. The main purpose of this mechanism is to provide a platform for the exchange of information about ongoing and planned activities relevant to SEIS development, and to build synergies among and join the efforts of the main interested stakeholders.

3. Friends of SEIS will be led by the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP). The following bodies and organizations are invited to nominate members to the Group:

(a) The CEP Bureau;

(b) The Bureau of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment;

(c) Governing or subsidiary bodies of relevant United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) multilateral environmental agreements;

(d) The European Commission;

(e) The European Environment Agency;

(f) The United Nations Environment Programme;

(g) The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe;

(h) The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;

(i) The Regional Environmental Centres;

(j) The European ECO Forum.

ECE member States are invited to nominate their members to the Group, based on a balanced geographical representation. All countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia are strongly encouraged to nominate their members to the Group. The CEP Chair may decide to invite representatives of other bodies and organizations, as necessary.

4. Friends of SEIS will meet when necessary (once a year on average). Preferably, the Group's meetings will be organized back-to-back with meetings of other bodies (e.g CEP, the CEP Bureau, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment). The Group shall keep its meetings to the minimum necessary and shall work as much as possible by electronic means (e.g. e-mail, teleconference).

5. At its first meeting, Friends of SEIS will agree on a plan of their concrete activities. Such a plan shall take into account SEIS-related developments, including, among others, the SEIS-related documents submitted to the nineteenth session of CEP (ECE/CEP/2013/15, ECE/CEP/2013/18 and ECE/CEP/2013/13). Specifically, Friends of SEIS should aim to provide answers to the following two questions to the twentieth session

of CEP in 2014: (a) How to monitor and evaluate progress: what should be the clear targets and performance indicators for the development of SEIS?; (b) How to organize and shape the regular assessment process taking into consideration the benefits of SEIS?

6. Friends of SEIS will be serviced by the ECE secretariat. Conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Geneva will be provided for the meetings of Friends of SEIS. The working language will be English.

7. Donors will be invited to support the work of Friends of SEIS, including the travel of eligible members, as well as, in case of need, the travel of ECE staff to participate in and support the organization of meetings held outside of Geneva.

8. These terms of reference will cover the biennium 2014–2015. CEP may decide to extend them at its session in late 2015.

9. The Friends of SEIS will regularly inform CEP on the implementation of its mandate.

Annex II

Estimated extrabudgetary resource requirements for the ECE secretariat to support the work of the Group of Friends of SEIS

From January 2014 to November 2015

(in United States dollars; rounded)

Object of expenditure	*Unit*	*Unit cost*	*No. of Units*	*Total*
Travel of eligible members of the group in 2014	member-mission	2,000	15	30,000
Travel of eligible members of the group in 2015	member-mission	2,000	15	30,000
Travel on official business by ECE staff to coordination meetings in 2014	member-mission	2,000	2	4,000
Travel on official business by ECE staff to coordination meetings in 2015	member-mission	2,000	2	4,000
1. Net total				**68,000**
2. Programme support costs (13%)				8,800
3. GRAND TOTAL				**76,800**